Varieties of

Jewish Anarchism:

A Brief Introduction

Anthony T. Fiscella

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לֵךְ־אֶל־נְמָלָה עָצֵל רְאֵה דְרָכֶיהָ וַחֲכָם: אֲשֶׁר אֵין־לָהּ קָצִין שֹׁטֵר וּמֹשֵׁל: תָּכִין בַּקַּיִץ לַחְמָהּ אָגְרָה בַּקָּצִיר
וּמֹשֵׁל: מֶלֶךְ אַיִן לָאַרְבֶּה וַיֵּצֵא חֹצֵץ כֻּלּוֹ:

Go to the ant, you sluggard; consider its ways and be wise! It has no commander, no overseer or ruler, yet it stores its provisions in summer and gathers its food at harvest. […] The locusts have no king, yet they all advance in formation.
Proverbs (6: 6; 30: 27)

בַּיָּמִים הָהֵם אַיִן מֶלֶךְ בְּיִשְׂרָאֵל אִישׁ הַיָּשָׁר בְּעֵינָיו יַעֲשֶׂה:

In those days there was no king in Israel; each man did that which was right in his eyes.
Judges (21: 25)

This text follows my previous "Varieties of Islamic Anarchism" (2014). I ended that booklet with a quote from a Jewish anarchist (Noam Chomsky). Now, more than ten years later, the time seems ripe for a similar overview regarding various Jewish anarchisms. In contrast to Islamic anarchisms, we find a massive amount of scholarly work on Jewish anarchists/anarchisms. Rather than help readers navigate through an academic desert as with Islamic anarchisms (where relatively little material existed at the time), this current task aims to assist in orienting readers through a jungle full of texts on the topic. Strikingly, one can hardly disentangle the *rise of anarchism* as a philosophy and an activist-labor movement in Europe on one hand and *Jewish anarchists* on the other. Along with Chomsky, one may identify many prominent anarchists, quasi-anarchists, and anti-authoritarian socialists as Jewish: Rose Pesotta, Murray Bookchin, Emma Goldman, Alexander Berkman, Abbie Hoffman, David Graeber, Sam and Esther Dolgoff, Sophie and Joseph Cohen, Hilly Kristal, Cindy Milstein, Fredy Perlman, Walter Benjamin, David Rovics, Gustav Landauer, Dave Dictor, Peter Werbe, Spencer Sunshine, Robert Paul Wolff, Richard Hell, Howard Zinn, Erich Mühsam, Rosa Luxemburg, Paula Ben-Gurion, and biologist friend to Kropotkin, Marie Goldsmith. Yet, nearly all of them have identified as atheist and/or disavowed any influence of Judaic faith on their (quasi)anarchism. Subsequently, most research on "Jewish anarchism" has focused on people and groups with an ethnic/cultural tie to Judaism rather than a relationship to *some* conception of God. I choose to focus on the latter. I don't self-identify as either Jewish or anarchist, I don't speak Hebrew or Yiddish, and I have not specialized in the study of either Judaism or anarchism. But I can (ostensibly) read and try to share what little I have learned. (Big thanks to Hayyim Rothman and Gabriel Kuhn for feedback!). If you see any inaccuracies, *tsveyfl nisht* (don't hesitate), just write: (my first name [dot] last name @gmail.com).
-Anthony T. Fiscella, N© (copyleft), Hanukkah 2024-2025.

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Breslov: https://breslov.org/breslov-faq
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Jewish Radical Calendar: www.radicaljewishcalendar.com
JeWitch: https://web.archive.org/web/20240725055904/http://www.jewitch.org
Karaites: https://www.karaites.org
Pink Peacock (queer, anarchist, Yiddish vegan cafe): https://pinkpeacock.gay
Ratzon (Rah-tzone): https://www.ratzonpgh.org
Shalom Center (Jewish Renewal): www.theshalomcenter.org
Smol Emuni/Faithful Left: www.smolemuni.com (Heb) www.smolemunius.com (Eng)
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"How Zionism Stole Jewish Identity" with Rabbi Yaakov Shapiro (Satmar) https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=eye3eOaBGrw
"Punk Jews" (2012, full movie): https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=5c29lJ3U_A0

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Beginning close to home—not the home I grew up in where books by Noam Chomsky (b. 1928) mingled with a collection of Hasidic sayings by Martin Buber (1878-1965) and *You Shall Be as Gods* (1966) by Erich Fromm (1900-1980)—but a life-changing encounter for me with an Israeli anarchist. When his punk band came through Sweden in 2007, I asked him if he knew of any Jewish anarchists nearby. He suggested I talk with Gabriel Kuhn in Stockholm. "Definitely anarchist, probably Jewish," he said. I did and, upon our first meeting, Gabriel quickly dispelled the assumption of his purported Jewishness (although he didn't deny he might have some distant Jewish relatives in his family tree). Nonetheless, we developed a close, tremendously impactful friendship and he would later help me copyedit and distribute *Varieties of Islamic Anarchism*. He also published books of the writings of Jewish anarchists Gustav Landauer (1870-1919) and Erich Mühsam (1878-1934). The Israeli anarchist's presumption of Gabriel's Jewishness reminded me of fellow German anarchist Rudolf Rocker (1873-1958) whom many called the "Anarchist Rabbi."[1] It sufficed for Rocker to devote himself to the Jewish anarchist cause to acquire nominal Jewish status… if enough Jews labelled Gabriel "Jewish," would that make it so?

We might regard prototypical *anarchism* as both opposition to *all forms of domination* (including, but not limited to, hetero-patriarchy, racism, speciesism, and capital) as well as, more narrowly, egalitarian rejection of the state or, in positive terms, *libertarian socialism* (e.g., via federations of labor syndicates).

But what makes a person or group *Jewish*? In other Abrahamic traditions (e.g., most Islams and Christianities), one merely need utter a specific phrase with sincerity to qualify as a member. Yet Judaisms typically require a much more complex conversion process (if one did not grow up Jewish or have a verifiably Jewish mother).

Especially in these unusual times when many people conflate Jewishness with Zionism and the State of Israel, the idea of "Jewish" as an ethnicity seems prominent. Historically, many framed "Jewish" as a faith tradition[2] that included Ethiopians, Sephardic, and Mizrahi.

[1] He also worked with Yiddish anarchist journals *Arbeter Fraynd* in the UK and *Fraye Arbeter Shtime* in the U.S., and married Jewish anarchist Milly Witkop.
[2] The emphasis on "Jewish" as primarily an ethnicity arose with nationalism in the 1800s. Anti-Jewish nationalists in Germany coined the term "anti-Semitism" (Feldman 2018). Today, pro-Israeli Judeophobic gentiles spout George Soros conspiracy theories while calling critics of Israel "anti-Semitic" (Subotic 2022).

Nonetheless, the convention of Jewishness-as-ethnicity led to a particularly Jewish question: "How can I *both* belong to a special people with a unique relationship to the God of all people *and* also *not* regard my people as inherently any *better* than any other people?" Indeed, Mühsam attributed the development of nationalism in Europe in general to Judaism's self-image as a "chosen people" (Brody 2023: 76). In addition to ethnic lineage, cultures of practice, community, and shared experiences have helped shape Judaisms. As per one Hasidic saying, "When I went to see the rabbi, it was not to hear his teachings but to see how he unlaces and laces his felt shoes" (Biagini 2009: 2). The shared reference point—and sometimes shared experience—of *Eretz Israel*, the Holy Land from which God exiled Jews, has also served as a type of identifier. Finally, a third pillar of Judaism resides in a personal and collective relationship to the God of the Torah (G-d aka Yahweh aka YHVH). This relationship, characterized in part by negotiation and very personal dealings with the divine from Abraham and Moses to Job and Jonah,[3] also formed the traditional cornerstone of Jewish devotion. Rabbi Shapiro stated:

> The definition of a Jew is: it's a religion. It's a job description given by God. […] We are only a people because of our faith …obligated to fulfill these commandments. …The Zionists' plan was to change the definition of a Jew to a nationality. …They stripped Judaism of religious content, left the husks of whatever they could fit into their nationalism. […] Zionism is its own religion.

These three "markers" (perceived ethnicity, culture, and a covenant with an interventionist Yahweh) have collectively functioned as a sort of "holy trinity" (if you will) defining Jews/Judaism in an interwoven manner even in Jewish anarchist circles where "as early as in 1900 one cannot assume a clear distinction between a religious and a secular milieu" (Türk and Cohn 2018: 24). Different Jewish people and groups may emphasize or excise one or more element but the Trinity remains (alongside now a fourth "deity": the Israeli state).

[3] The personal relationship between Jews and Yahweh restricted the idea of "God as ultimate authority" and led believers to, at times, debate with and even resist Yahweh. Isaac Bashevi Singer wrote about his opposition to eating animals: "I can never accept inconsistency or injustice. Even if it comes from God. If there would come a voice from God saying, 'I'm against vegetarianism!' I would say, 'Well, I am for it!' This is how strongly I feel in this regard." Similarly, Hayyim Rothman described Rabbi Meir (b. 139- d. 163) as "one who forces God himself to accept these teachings!" (2020: 25).

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As water reflects the face, so one's heart reflects the heart (Proverbs 27:19).

If I hit a wall, I look for a way outside the system to get things done. […] Question everything, yes. But then figure out how to change it (Rashida Jones).

To me, the core of Judaism has always been the call for justice. That is inherent in what we need to do right now to heal and care for the earth (Starhawk).

Nature is the very essence of Deity (Israel Baal Shem Tov).

May all that are oppress'd of ocean, earth, or air, Alike receive redress—alike protection share (Lewis Gompertz, Jewish vegan socialist, 1852: 181).

Rabbi Nachman (as quoted in Buber 1956: 35, 38-39): *The world is like a revolving die, and everything turns over, [wo]man changes to angel and angel to [wo]man, the head to the foot and the foot to the head. So all things turn over and revolve and are changed, this into that and that into this, what is above to what is beneath and what is beneath to what is above. For in the root all is one, and in the transformation and return of things redemption is enclosed.*

Victory cannot tolerate the truth, and if one displays a true thing before your eyes, you reject it for the sake of victory. [The one], then, who wants the truth in [themselves] drives away the spirit of victory, for only then [are they] ready to behold the truth.

Through joy the spirit becomes settled, but through sadness it goes into exile.

Despite appearances, the quest for peace percolates not so much in conflicts between nations, faith communities, and exclusive claims to "truth" but more, like the blood of compassion, flowing in arteries of relationship on a shared journey to infinitely expand circles of care to include *all* life (including water, air, and soil) limited only by *pragmatics*—not arbitrary categories. Toward a world governed, not by violence, but by quests for understanding, empathy, and service.[24]

Im Yirtzeh Hashem, God willing, *Inshallah* (and if *we* will it).

> *How do we overcome the dead-end of nationalist politics? … A revolution calling for freedom may sometimes arise out of the same cultural sources that produce repression and tyranny at other periods. The basic concept of anarchism is that it is a kind of social order that relies not on coercive authority, but one that sustains itself through voluntary and pragmatic agreements, which in time become social traditions.*
>
> -Mohamed Bamyeh

[24] The recent HaSmol HaEmuni (Faithful Left) seems to embody this approach.

Jewish Anarchists and Israel

In the late 1800s and early 1900s, anarchism spread like wildfire through Jewish subcultural circles. Jewish anarchists also played influential roles in the global anarchist movement. The first Jewish anarchist group in the U.S., *Pionire der Frayhayt* (Pioneers of Liberty), founded in 1886, held *Yonkiper beler* (Yom Kippur Balls) between 1889 and 1903 where young Jewish anarchists, including Emma Goldman and Alexander Berkman, lampooned prayer, partied, and served ham sandwiches on the solemn Day of Atonement (otherwise associated with fasting).[4] Many, such as anarchist and garment worker union organizer Rose Pesotta (1896-1965), "believed in anarchism the way an Orthodox Jew believes in God."[5] Although most Jewish anarchists never traveled to Palestine and rejected all types of nationalism (including Jewish nationalism), a significant portion of Jewish anarchists, such as the early anarcho-Zionist Bernard Lazare (1865-1903) and Yoseph Chaim Brenner (1881-1921), chief writer of the second *Aliya* (mass emigration to Palestine), felt that they could combine nationalism with internationalism, forming settlements in Palestine with Jewish-Arab cooperation, and founding a Jewish homeland with anarchism.

A significant portion of those driving the creation of the Israeli state had anarchist proclivities or inspiration and many of the settler communes, *kibbutzim*, had anarchist ethos: emphasis on communal sharing, direct democracy, and collective labor. According to historian Jesse Cohn (2019), the anarchist Lazare inspired more of Israel's early settlers than the "statist/capitalist vision" of Zionist godfather Theodor Herzl (1860-1904).[6] Aaron David Gordon (1856-1922), pacifist, nationalist, secular Zionist, and implicit anarchist (along Tolstoyan lines), co-founded the anti-militarist group Hapoel Hatzair (The Young Worker) in 1905—one year after arriving in Palestine. His teaching inspired the founding of several kibbutzim. Gordon wrote: "The Land of Israel is acquired through labor, not through fire and not through blood" (Lasky 2008). Both Chaim Arlozorov (1899-1933), most famous for negotiating the deportation

[4] The first Yom Kippur Ball took place in London in 1888 and then spread to the U.S., Canada, Cuba, and elsewhere (Margolis 2001; Türk and Cohn 2018).
[5] See Leeder in Torres and Zimmer (2023: 230); Similarly, Emma Goldman told Rose Pesotta that she considered anarchists—not Jews—her true "flesh and blood" (Zimmer 2010: 103).
[6] Lazare briefly worked with Herzl but left the organization on account of Herzl's domineering approach. See Horrox (2009: 5) for anarchist kibbutzim.

of Jews to Israel from Nazi Germany (and, later, his mysterious assassination) and Berl Katznelson (1887-1944), an intellectual architect of Labor Zionism and the Israeli state, had anarchist sympathies (Türk 2022: 74).[7] The striking contrast between anarchist ideals and practical state-building, aspirations of peace and active displacement, common interests of all workers and exclusive (often racist) nationalism would come to sear themselves schizophrenically into the collective Israeli psyche.

Early influential anarchist-oriented Zionists, such as Josef Trumpeldor (1880-1920) and Vladimir "Ze'ev" Jabotinsky (1880-1940), embraced secularism, rejected pacifism, and founded the first Jewish defense forces.[8] Influenced by individualist-anarchist Max Stirner, Jabotinsky advocated minarchism (minimal state) and wrote:

> In the beginning God created the *individual*; every individual is a king equal to *his fellow-individual* — and the wicked one is a 'king' too; it is better that the individual sin against the community than society against the individual; it is for the benefit of the individual that society was created, not the other way round; and the final end, the vision of the Messianic days, is a Garden of Eden for the individual, a *brilliant kingdom of anarchy* (Nedava 1974: 79, italics added).[9]

Jabotinsky also co-founded the group Irgun Zvai Leumi in 1931 which would later commit a number of terrorist attacks including, along with fellow terrorist group Lehi, the massacre of unarmed villagers at Deir Yassin in 1948.[10]

Prior to 1948, most rabbis rejected the idea that Jews themselves should establish a Jewish state: God would do that. Today, only a minority of rabbis (such as those in non-anarchist Hasidic groups such as Satmar and Neturei Karta) seem wholly opposed to Zionism. At the same time, Jewish Zionist anarchist from

[7] Complex developments compelled socialists like Katznelson to reluctantly retract goals of peaceful coexistence in favor of partition and displacement.
[8] A.D. Gordon and Josef Trumpeldor both worked at the first *kvutza* (communal settlement) Degania Alef. Gordon and the "father of cultural Judaism" Ahad Ha'am (1856-1927) advocated a *spiritual* center in Palestine more than a state.
[9] Ironically, Jabotinsky chose Abba Gordin's nephew David Raziel to run Irgun.
[10] Later, Israel elected former Irgun members, Menachem Begin and Yitzhak Shamir, as prime ministers. Other Israeli prime ministers engaged in terrorism (e.g., Moshe Sharett via Lavon Affair and Ariel Sharon in the Qibya, Sabra, and Shatilla massacres) but Netanyahu's terror (killing tens of thousands of civilians) far surpasses that of all of his predecessors combined.

Fig. 1 Varieties of Jewish Anarchism: Violence and Zionism

		Zionism-Statism			
Pacifism-Violence		*Anti-Zionist Statist*	*Zionist Anti-State*	*Anti-Zionist Anti-State*	*Zionist Statist*
	Pacifist and/or Vegan/ Vegetarian		Heyn (in theory) Simone Weil (pre-Fascism) Hofshi Zalkind A.D. Gordon	Tamaret Steinberg (later in life) Abba Gordin	Sereni (pre-Nazi period)
	Violence in Self-Defense	Satmar Neturei Karta	Chomsky Ashlag (in theory) Gershom Scholem Gdud Ha-Avoda (Labor Battalion) Simone Weil (antifa)	Goldberg Yotzeret Sheydim Steinberg (early in life)	Ashlag (in practice) Heyn (in practice) Sereni (anti-Nazis)
	Violence for Vengeance/ Terrorism		Schwarzbard		Jabotinsky
	Unarmed Direct Action		Anarchists Against the Wall "*Direct action is the democratic act when democracy stops functioning*" (2004).		

Fig. 2 Varieties of Jewish Anarchism: Technology and Identity

	God-Culture-Nation			
Primitivism-Technophilia		*Theistic Judaism*	*Cultural Judaism*	*Ethno-Nationalist Judaism*
	Anarcho-Primitivist	Abravanel	Perlman	
	Agrarian-anarchist/ Techno-skeptical	Hofshi Starhawk Michael Lerner	A.D. Gordon Many *kibbutzim*	
	Technophilic	Tamaret Steinberg	Chomsky	Jabotinsky

Note: "Zionist," here means "pro-Israel" more than "pro-Jewish homeland." Take this chart as a crude estimate at best. Both people and categories change over time. Also, people often land somewhere on a spectrum between one category and another.

Michael Lerner (1943-2024), a Jewish Renewal rabbi, chief editor of *Tikkun* ("Reparation"), Hillary Clinton adviser, and former member of the Seattle Liberation Front, once wrote:

> If the counter-culture is at all prophetic of the way needs and capacities will change, the anarchist model and anarchist values may have more to do with the shape of future society than we have expected (Lerner 1972: 59).

Hadar Cohen (b. circa 1993), anti-Zionist, Arab Jewish scholar, has described herself as a "mystic who works to build decolonial frameworks for worshipping God […] by learning to see the Divine in everything […] with the understanding that the liberation of the self is intrinsically linked to the liberation of the world" (2022). Not necessarily anarchist, she hosts podcasts on topics such as the Israeli Black Panthers and "Shel Maala: An Anti-Zionist Queer Yeshiva."

In 2011, Daniel "Mobius" Sieradski aka blogger under the rubric of "Orthodox Anarchist" (b. 1979), organized a Jewish prayer service at Occupy Wall Street. He has written:

> I think "orthodoxies" themselves are idolatrous. they presume to know what god wants of us (if God is even a consciousness that has wants and desires[*]), confine the unknowable infinite into a very finite form, and anthropromorphize "Her" in a way I'm very uncomfortable with. I feel that we've stopped worshipping God (as if we ever did), and have turned to worshipping our interpretations of God—condemning those whose interpretations don't coincide with the status quo's (of whichever denomination you're dealing with). I find this in itself to be contrary to Abrahamic monotheism and thus I believe we've gotta smash the state—the state of mind.

Finally, hardcore and punk scenes have an interwoven Jewish history too long to discuss here but we can mention Rachel Rabble's zine *J/A/P (Jewish Anarchist Punk),* The Shondes (anti-Zionist riot grrrl group), Golem (klezmer punk collective), the hardcore punk Breslov adherents Moshiach Oi!, anarcho-queer-art-punkers God is My Co-Pilot, antifa noise musician Yotzeret Sheydim as well as the hardcore punk who introduced me to Gabriel Kuhn: straight edge DIY activist and anarchist, Federico Gomez of Israeli anarcho-punk hardcore bands Dir Yassin in Nekhei Na'atza.[23] And the river returns (Ec. 1:7).

[*] Dan's footnote: "This is a question that I feel, if we ever stop struggling with, we stop being 'Israel'" (Sieradski 2004).

[23] Federico and his brother Santiago grew up in the Lehavot HaBashan kibbutz.

the U.S., Doreen Bell-Dotan, reluctantly accepted the Israel state as "necessary," moved to Safed (ethnically cleansed only a generation ago), and applied historical revisionism to justify Palestinian displacement.[11] Anti-Zionist anarchists in Israel, such as Anarchists Against the Wall, remain largely in the so-called "secular" tradition.

This tendency may obscure a history of Jewish anarchist theists in Israel's history. Anarcho-pacifist and vegetarian Natan Hofshi (1880–1980) co-founded the Israeli branch of War Resisters' International in 1946, later run by fellow vegetarian anarcho-pacifist Yeshaayahu Toma Ŝik (1939-2004). Anarchist pacifist Abba Gordin (1887–1964), who had previously played a prominent role in anarchist organizing preceding the Russian Revolution (even serving prison time under the Bolsheviks and getting rescued from death by Lenin's wife), eventually moved to Israel and co-founded one of the first formal anarchist groups in Israel: ASHUACH (Agudat Shocharei Chofesh, Freedom-Seekers Association) with about 150 members and its own Yiddish-Hebrew journal *Problemen/Problemot* which discussed the spiritual roots of anarchism (Gordon 2009: 2). Some anarchists gave tacit approval to the Israeli state in hope that it would move closer to an anarchist-socialist society. Anarcho-pacifist Rabbi Abraham Heyn (1880-1957) even worked for the new state. Anarchist Rabbi Yehuda Ashlag (1885-1954), whose students later founded the Kabbalah Centre, met with Israel's first prime minister David Ben-Gurion and asked him when the state would transition to communism (Zagoria-Moffet 2017: 78). Other anarchists saw the Jewish state as anathema. Virulent anti-Zionist Oskar Goldberg (1885-1952) claimed that Jews lost their chosen status when they opted for a state (whether in biblical times or modern-day Israel). The act of statecraft removed God to "the heavens" while granting the state all relevant and worldly powers (Friedlander 1992: 54). This view aligns with the contention of Satmar Rabbi Shapiro above that Zionism constitutes a form of idolatry, a new "golden calf" so to speak. Anarcho-Zionists such as Bernard Lazare saw nationhood and

[11] See Bell-Dotan, "Israel is a Mistake" (2006). https://web.archive.org/web/20100924210947/http://doreenellenbelldotan.info/IsraelMistake.htm and "An Anarchist Explains Why Israel Is Not An Imperialist State" (2006). Although a blogger for Jewish anarchism since 2004 (expressing support for the Essenes, Karaites, polyamory, and veganism), she also claimed that the U.S. presidential election of 2020 should have gone to the hyper-Zionist billionaire then in office. See Dotan, "How Christians Sabotage Trump and Themselves" (2020). https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=HW1W-GD_z5c

nationalism as a prerequisite for cultural diversity and creative expression and distinct from statehood and the protectionism and exclusivism of "chauvinistic, narrow, and absurd patriotism" (Lazare 1948: 72-73).[12] For him, nationalism entailed a stateless socialist *internationalism*. Things did not work out as Lazare had hoped.

Yet, as we shall see here, a variety of Jewish anarchist expressions—far older than the Israeli state—have manifested throughout history. Empires come and go but the relationship to God has often pulled believers toward a higher power than the state.

Sources of Jewish Anarchism

What sort of varieties of anarchism do we see in historical Judaisms?

First, some people, such as Landauer and anarchist Rabbi Smuel Alexandrov (1865-1965), saw Jewish statelessness (potentially applicable to any stateless people) as predisposing them to anarchism[13] (Rothman 2021: 121). Experiencing the brunt of state violence, mob pogroms, and the necessity of independent communal organization made the state seem neither benign nor necessary. If applicable to Ashkenazi Jews then how would this affect more un(der)represented Black Jews, Arab Jews, and Indian Jews?[14]

Second, whereas Mühsam maintained that belief in a supernatural deity paved the way for authoritarianism, "religious oppression, and the patriarchal family," Buber and Aaron Smuel Tamaret (1869-1931) believed that the Torah principle of *God as the only ruler* delegitimized any rule of humans over others. Jewish anarchists such as Rabbi Yehudah-Leyb Don-Yahiya (1869-1941), Heyn, Hofshi, Jesus, and others used the idea of God as universal father to conclude that, as children of the same father, humans cannot rule over one another.[15]

Third, as Jewish anarchist Abba Gordin (1887-1964) argued, Jewish culture went beyond mere statelessness to form a functional decentralized social order:

[12] Previously "assimilated," Lazare felt pushed toward Zionism due to countless attacks on Jews and, specifically, the racist Dreyfus Affair in France in 1894.
[13] Indeed, "Hebrew" stems from *khabiru*, the Akkadian word for "vagrant."
[14] See, for Black Jews, (Parfitt 2013), Arab Jews (Shenhav 2006), and Indian Jews (Egorova 2018).
[15] For Mühsam and Buber, see Brody in Torres and Zimmer (2023: 76-79); For Don-Yahiya, Heyn, Hofshi, and Tamaret, see Rothman (2021: 159; 167-168; 186; 212); Jesus, (Matt. 23: 8-12; Mark 10: 42-44).

Palestine" (Johnson 2012: 234). He had close ties to both Rudolf Rocker and Sholem Schwarzbard (1886-1938), the anarchist who, in 1926, assassinated Symon Petliura, the Ukrainian nationalist deemed responsible for the massacre of 15,000 Jews (including Schwarzbard's family). Schwarzbard cited "the blood of the Prophet Zachariah" as boiling within him by the memories of the pogroms (Johnson 2012: 145). A French jury saw the assassination as justified and acquitted him. Similarly, Jacob Marateck, Polish working class revolutionary with anarchist proclivities, got sentenced to death three times and managed each time to escape while—when he could—carrying his Torah of *tefillin* parchments with him (Kranzler 2010). Two pacifist-socialist intellectuals, Simone Weil (1909-1943) from France and Enzo Sereni (1905-1944) from Italy, both changed their positions in the face of fascist violence with Weil (an anagram of Levi) joining anarchists in the Spanish Civil War and Sereni (who co-founded the kibbutz Givat Brenner in Palestine in 1928) going on to smuggle Jews out of Nazi Germany and collaborating with the British Special Operations Executive (SOE) to organize a Jewish parachute unit sending agents (including himself) into occupied Europe (where Nazis captured and executed him).

Marshall Rosenberg (1934-2015) grew up in Chicago and described how observing and experiencing anti-Jewish behavior contributed to him creating a strategy to facilitate peaceful and compassionate connection between people (which he labeled Non-Violent Communication or (NVC). He wrote: "[Some] gangs call themselves multinational corporations. Some call themselves governments. […] These gangs control the schools, and many of them want the teachers to teach students that there's a right and a wrong, a good and a bad" (Rosenberg 2005: 107).

Fredy Perlman (1934-1985), prominent anarcho-primitivist,[22] narrowly escaped a Holocaust fated for his relatives when Nazis invaded Czechoslovakia and described autobiographically the wonder he felt as he watched Zionists revel unhindered in the type of racist rhetoric that led to the round-up and slaughter of his extended family. Later, in *Against His-story, Against Leviathan*, he spoke in prophetic tones against Torah scriptures that enabled massacres and the expanding cult of Science and Technology (e.g., 1983: 42).

[22] Rothman identified medieval Rabbi Isaac Abravanel as "anarcho-primitivist" as he saw the pre-state Eden period of humanity as the ideal society (2021: 26).

style as its socialist model and the *peule* mimicked the socialist call for direct action—except translated into a spiritual sense, and they even formed tight affinity groups reminiscent of revolutionary cells).

Jewish anarchist groups today include the Pittsburgh center Ratzon (Hebrew for yearning and possibility) and RAYJ (pronounced "rage," Rebellious Anarchist Young Jews) both formed after the massacre of 11 people at the Tree of Life synagogue in 2011. Ratzon currently provides a physical queer-friendly space for Shabbat services, prayer, and holiday celebrations (similar to Pink Peacock).

Seventh, we can see Jewish anarchism in a host of people who, each in their own way, drew their anarchism in part or in whole from their Judaism and/or Jewish experience. Rothman's book, *No Masters, No God: Portraits of Anarcho-Judaism*, (2021) constitutes a milestone in this regard. It fills in a critical gap in scholarship and its emphasis on primarily Hasidic anarchists of the late 1800s and early 1900s helps illustrate a broad variety of possibilities. Therein, he divided eight men into categories of activists (Zalkind, Steinberg), mystics (Alexandrov, Ashlag), and pacifists (Don-Yahiya, Heyn, Hofshi, Tamaret). Elsewhere, Rothman (2020b) covered Orthodox Rabbi Abraham Bick who founded the socialist yeshiva *Institut far Yidisher Bildung* in New York in 1945. Rabbi Amnon Shapira (1935-2023), in his mammoth work in Hebrew *Religious Jewish Anarchism* (2015) composed perhaps the first attempt at articulating both a history and expression of theological Jewish Anarchism.

Inspired by the *Kabbalah* (Jewish mystical teaching), Shabbatai Zevi (1626-1676) stirred the majority of Jews to believe that he, the Messiah, had arrived in 1666, he would end the Law (or, rather, create new laws), and he would gather all Jews in Jerusalem. Tens of thousands of Jews sold their belongings to join him. His brief career ended when the Ottoman Sultan had him arrested and forced him to choose: execution, perform a miracle, or convert to Islam. Zevi chose conversion (and some of his followers did too, now known as Dönme in Turkey). Following in Zevi's footsteps, Jacob Frank (1726-1791) started a similarly antinomian movement sometimes described as "religious anarchy" (yet perhaps, more accurately, as "anarcho-tyranny") (Levine 2005: 125).

British anti-militarist, anarcho-communist Rabbi Yankev-Meyer Zalkind of London Rabbi Yankev Zalkind moved to Israel in 1930 and gave "fiery speeches against the Zionists, arguing for the foundation of a 'stateless society built on an anarchist foundation' in

> The people will recognize the Jewish people and our bright and reasonable tradition. Reason, mindfulness. …Do people esteem mere reason, mere wisdom, without the addition of an anti-tank rocket? …The Jews, as a people [folk], have proved that it is possible to make a living and exist apart from the secular state. Moreover, they …created a codex …listened to its rulings, and they initiated their own judicial body [*bezdn*]. They have …formed its union on a federal basis, not centralistically. What is the *bezdn* based on? On compromise, on mediation, not on slamming down verdicts. …There were no lawyers, attorneys, or other nuisances. You could speak from your heart and in the end you would reach an understanding, an agreement. Both sides were held separately, understanding each situation and its demands and to what extent each side was willing to give in. Eventually, both sides parted satisfied, reconciled. All sides were considered civil viewpoints, never criminal (Türk 2022: 70-71).

The Beta Israel (Haymanot Ethiopian Jews) similarly emphasized the Torah, other scriptures, and non-Talmudic oral traditions but even developed a Jewish monastic ascetic tradition. Scottish explorer James Bruce wrote a description in 1790, plausibly about the Beta Israeli monks, as "capital performers in all disorder of the state; all prophets and diviners, keeping up the spirit of riot, anarchy, and tumult by their fanatical inventions and pretended visions" and Sophia Dege-Müller, citing Kaplan, mentioned their "lack of 'centralized communal institutions'" (2020: 68, 65).

Fourth, some have culled an anarchist spirit from specific practices and Jewish traditions. Mühsam saw the biblical Jubilee as a "communist effort."[16] Rabbi Joseph di Trani (1568-1639) translated "the Great Sabbath" (prior to Passover) as "The General Strike."[17] Heyn's Jewish anarchism derived, in part, from "a rabbinic prohibition against directly counting people"[18] which, for him, signified the uniqueness—and thereby sacred value—of each person which, in turn, contributed to his pacifism. Heyn furthermore cited the ritual prayers during Rosh HaShanah and Yom Kippur, to "make all of them [the nations] a single bundle (*agudah ahat*)" which, for Heyn, implied "the secret of redemption in absolute equality" (Rothman 2020a: 50). Gershom Scholem wrote: "There is an anarchic element in the very nature of messianic utopianism: the

[16] See Brody in Torres and Zimmer (2023: 75), citing scripture Jeremiah (29:7).
[17] Also, see Jacob (2023: 102) for the Sabbath as "the first General Strike."
[18] See Rothman (2020a: 32 and 2021: 164). Imagine how refusing to turn people into numbers would sing a death knell for any bureaucracy.

dissolution of the old ties which lose their meaning in the new context of messianic freedom" (Löwy 2017: 15).

Fifth, we can see scriptural verses that have held particular meaning for some Jewish anarchists. For Heyn, Jeremiah (31:33), held particular value: "no longer will a man teach his neighbor, or a man his brother, to say know the Lord, for they will all know me." For both Heyn and many others, the promise and delivery of Jews from servitude in Exodus to "be free from government; like a beast free in the wilderness without any fear of men, so I thought that you should be beset with no fear of governments" (Rothman 2020a: 41). Some have furthermore interpreted Exodus to mean that God will fight in our stead, so humans shouldn't fight (Wilcock 1994: 76; also, see Exodus 14:14 "The Lord will fight for you, and you shall hold your peace"). In this spirit, Don-Yahiya, saw non-violence as the very essence of the Torah (Rothman 2021: 157). For Jewish pacifists, we have seen other key scriptures such as:

"*You shall love your neighbor as yourself*" (Leviticus 19:18).

"*And they shall beat their swords into plowshares and their spears into pruning hooks. Nation will not take up sword again nation., nor will they train for war anymore*" (Isaiah 2:4).

"*Murder may not be committed (even) to save one's life*" (Babylonian Talmud, Sanhedrin 7a).

"*That which is hateful to you, do not do to your fellow; that is the essence of the Torah. The rest is commentary: Go and learn*" (Hillel, 1st century, Babylonian Talmud, Shabat 31a).

Revolutionary anarcho-communist Yitshak Nahman Steinberg (1888-1957) briefly took part in the Bolshevik government for a few months (1917-1918) and advocated "creatively killing the state" by replacing it with "the power and sanctity of the spiritual-religious idea" so that God's "presence fills all the Earth" (Isaiah 6:3).[19]

Sixth, we can sense a certain anarchist spirit in various Jewish groups. Yosef Luden labeled the Essenes (contemporaries of Jesus) the first Jewish anarchist group "due to their libertarianism and system of communal property and mutual aid."[20] The Qumran sect

[19] See Rothman (2021: 83, 88; separate Steinberg quotes stitched together here). Steinberg advocated Territorialism as opposed to mainstream Zionism. The Territorialists believed Jews needed a home but not necessarily in Palestine. Today, one might describe such early Jewish anarchists as "anti-Israel" Zionists.
[20] See Torres and Zimmer (2023: 239). Peter Marshall rejected this description because the Essenes "kept strict religious observances and regarded themselves as a moral elite" (Ibid). Perlman called them "Jewish dropouts" (1983: 74).

(typically identified as Essenes) wrote in the Dead Sea Scrolls: "All those who freely devote themselves to His truth shall bring all their knowledge, powers, and possessions into the community of God" (Vermes 1975: 72). The Karaites (the "oldest existing form of Judaism" as stated on a Karaite website) developed very early in Jewish history a practice of bypassing the Talmud and rabbinic tradition as authoritative and only turning to the Torah. This has, in turn, facilitated a sort of anarchistic approach to interpretation. Without rabbinical authorities to interpret the Torah, each Karaite interprets personally in community. We see a similar dynamic among the highly decentralized Breslov Hasidic devotees of Rabbi Nachman (1772-1810).[21] The Commandment Keepers, co-founded by Rabbi Wentworth Arthur Matthew in 1919, described Africans as historical Israelites, like the Hebrews under Pharaoh, born out of slavery. Rabbi Yosef Yoizl Hurwitz (ca. 1848-1919) of the Musar Movement co-founded a yeshiva in Novaredok in 1896 where, according to David Fishman, "Never had a yeshiva deviated so far from the historical norm." In addition to ignoring personal hygiene and wearing soiled and tattered clothes and traditional long black coats, they consciously engaged in deviant behavior such as going into a pharmacy or bakery and asking for nails in order to be publicly ridiculed, standing in a market shouting lines from the Torah, or intentionally entering a train without a ticket. This type of *peule* (literally "action"), introduced in 1905, would ostensibly "subdue [the student's] natural instincts of vanity, economic calculation, or love of material goods." They shared possessions communistically in order "to rid themselves of their desires for worldly possessions." They also engaged in a sort of group self-reflection called *birzhe* (literally "market") which entailed walking in pairs to and fro in the yeshiva hall, exchanging partners, and asking each other about the state of their personal spiritual condition. Although opposed to the *Haskalah* (Jewish Enlightenment) of the 1700s and 1800s, the Musar experiment of Rabbi Hurwitz seemed to borrow strategies from their socialist "competitors" (the *birzhe* had the same name and similar

[21] According to a Breslov website: "Every Breslover Chassid is completely free to turn to any guide or teacher he [or she] chooses or feels some personal connection with. While individual Breslover institutions have their boards of governors, there is no single 'Council of Elders' or similar body with authority over the entire Breslov movement. […] Rebbe Nachman's teachings call on each Jew to accept responsibility for [their] life and take practical steps to develop [their] own personal relationship with God."